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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [TU](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: BALKH GOVERNOR ATTA CHARGES GIROA ASSASSINATION
PLOT, TURKISH "PAN-TURKIC" AGENDA

REF: KABUL 2814

Classified By: Interagency Provincial Affairs Deputy Coordinator Hoyt Yee for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Governor of Balkh Province Atta Mohammad Noor has accused Minister of Interior Mohammad Hanif Atmar of plotting to destabilize Afghanistan's northern region and to assassinate him because of his support for presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah. He charged that in a recent meeting President Karzai held with Atmar and other senior security advisors, Atmar falsely claimed that Atta was plotting to attack Kabul City. Atta repeated his earlier claims that the central government has armed unofficial district commanders and Taliban in Kunduz and Baghlan. Separately, he argued that if Turkey is allowed to establish a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Jawzjan Province, it will serve as a platform to further Turkey's destabilizing "Pan-Turkic" agenda in the northern region. End Summary

¶2. (C) PRToff met Sept 16 with Governor Atta in his public audience hall to introduce incoming PRT Mazar-e-Sharif USAID Field Program Officer Vanita Datta and to present her and USAID Regional Command-North (RC-N)-based Development Advisor Nino Nadiradze as part of the RC-N development team. PRToff detailed the planned civilian expansion in the region, including establishment of a senior civilian platform at RC-N and the intent to open a consulate in 2010. Afterwards, Atta asked to speak privately on Balkh province security issues and post-election political uncertainty. Referring to his provocative Massoud Day remarks that were broadcast on national television, Atta said the points he made were the consequence of the central government trying his patience. "I could have said much more. I could have spoken about central government terror and assassination plots against me."

Assassination Plots

¶3. (C) Governor Atta charged that Interior Minister Atmar had been making improper and negative remarks about him to President Karzai, to the Afghan National Security Council and to UN Special Representative for Afghanistan Kai Eide. Atmar, Atta claimed, had been saying that the Balkh Governor is "against the rule of law, against development and actively trying to destabilize Balkh and the entire nation." He went on to say that, in a recent meeting Karzai held with Atmar and other senior security advisors, Atmar falsely accused Atta of being in the Shamali region (the region immediately outside of Kabul) plotting to attack Kabul City. "A friend of mine present at this meeting called me on my cell phone to ask me where I was. I told him --and the larger speakerphone audience-- that I was right where I was supposed to be, here in Mazar taking care of my people."

¶4. (C) Atta accused Minister of Interior Atmar of plotting to destabilize the northern region and to assassinate him because of his support for Abdullah and because "Atmar and other Karzai supporters are men of little political capacity." Democratic principles, he argued, allow him to publicly support whichever candidate he chooses. (Note: In fact, current election law prohibits appointed government officials like Atta from publicly endorsing presidential candidates. End Note).

GIROA Arming the Taliban?

¶5. (C) Atta called himself a necessary actor in Balkh. "If I take my eye off of the province, security here will deteriorate," he stated. He reiterated his Massoud Day charge that the central government has armed district commanders ("We have the names and the evidence!") (Comment: Atta was referring to the group of informal district strongmen in Balkh who are not connected to Afghan security forces and not allied with him, including some who are non-Tajik Pashtuns and Hazaras. End comment.) He further charged that the central government has armed Taliban in Kunduz and Baghlan ("We are developing evidence and will submit it to the international community soon.") The central government is arming the Taliban, he argued, in order to fool the international community into supporting its agenda. But this poorly conceived strategy will inevitably backfire on the Karzai administration, Atta predicted: "They will be trapped by their intrigue, just as the Pakistanis, whose army and intelligence service actively supported the Taliban, were eventually trapped by theirs."

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On the Elections

¶6. (C) Governor Atta said that he had spoken out on elections because he did not want Afghanistan's young democratic institutions to be fatally tainted by the fraud, about which the Abdullah campaign has provided ample proof to the ECC. It must be increasingly difficult for international community members to accept such manipulation without commenting, he speculated, pointing out the very public disagreement between UN Special Representative Kai Eide and his former deputy (and former U.S. Ambassador) Peter Galbraith over how to deal with a fraud so overwhelming that it is draining what little credibility the Karzai administration has left. "International Community members who have spent so much of their tax-payers, money and spilled so much of their young soldiers, blood are now under pressure from their own parliaments to justify their continued engagement in Afghanistan, but they cannot even tell their governments that they've brought democracy to Afghanistan!" was Atta's final word.

Perceived Dangers of a Turkish PRT in Jawzjan

¶7. (C) Turkey has long cultivated ties with and openly favors Turkic ethnic groups in Afghanistan, Atta said. He had hoped that, as a member of NATO, Turkey's policies would mature and the country would expand its focus to supporting the entire Afghan nation. But, he charged, Turkish representatives had met with President Karzai to steer Junbesh Party support to the Karzai campaign. Worse still, he said, Turkey brought human rights violator General Rashid Dostum back to Afghanistan, a clear indicator that Turkey has not grown out of its old interventionist ways.

¶8. (C) If Turkey is allowed to establish a PRT in Jawzjan Province, it will serve as a platform to further Turkey's "Pan-Turkic" agenda in the area, Atta charged. With assistance from Uzbekistan, he added, Turkey, which already wields far too much influence in Afghanistan's northern

region, can be a significant destabilizing force. Turkey, he concluded, wants to be accepted by the international community as its most influential partner in northern Afghanistan, much as Pakistan is accepted as the most influential partner in the southern region. (For Embassy Kabul's reporting on Turkish exploratory steps to establish a PRT in Jawzjan, see reftel)

19. (C) Comment: By all accounts, Governor Atta continues to be effective in Balkh, rebuilding and expanding Mazar-e-Sharif city infrastructure and wringing significant development initiatives from the international donor community, including important new road and road repair work and, from the German Regional Command based in Mazar-e-Sharif, a new airport. His penchant for theatrical saber rattling was again apparent in this meeting. Behind all the bluster against supposed central government machinations and plotting, there appears to be one clear message to the Karzai administration and to the international community: they must deal with him as a regional player. He is very likely, however, to be one of Karzai's targets for reappointment in a possible second term. End Comment

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